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Endangered House candidates grapple with how closely to run with Biden and Trump



Alaska U.S. Rep. Mary Peltola, a Democrat, speaks to reporters after giving an address to state lawmakers, Feb. 17, 2023, in Juneau, Alaska.

Associated Press
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By SCHUYLER DIXON
AP Sports Writer

ARLINGTON, Texas (AP) — Rafael McDonnell sometimes gets to address the staff of his beloved Texas Rangers on issues of diversity and inclusion through his role with the Resource

Center, one of the leading LGBTQ+ organizations in the Dallas area. For several years, the Rangers have been the only Major League Baseball team without a Pride Night. When questioned about it, Texas has cited its work with the

Resource Center, among other organizations. As Pride Month — the June celebration of LGBTQ+ culture and rights — comes and goes again without the Rangers participating, McDonnell tried to explain the connection between his

group and the team he has loved and watched for the better part of 50 years. "It's a complicated relationship," McDonnell said. "As someone who grew up watching the Rangers, as someone who has gone to games since the 1970s, some of my

biggest and best memories are going to games at the old Arlington Stadium with my late grandfather and listening to games on the radio in his backyard.

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TASTE OF ARUBA
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Endangered House candidates grapple with how closely to run with Biden and Trump

Continued from Front

"It pains me that this remains an issue (after) all these years."

Painful enough, McDonnell said, that he considered not attending the parade with his boyfriend when the Rangers celebrated their first World Series championship last fall. Ultimately, he decided to go.

McDonnell, the communications and advocacy manager for the Resource Center, says the Rangers invited his group to help them develop a policy of inclusion about five years ago.

The team has sent employees to volunteer for programs in an organization that grew out of the AIDS crisis in the 1980s and advocates for marriage equality and transgender rights.

While he has continuing conversations with members of the Rangers staff, McDonnell says he doesn't recall any since the five-game victory over the Arizona Diamondbacks in last year's Fall Classic.

"For a long time, I've thought that it might be somebody very high up in the organization who is opposed to this for some reason that is not clearly articulated," McDonnell said. "To say that the Rangers aren't doing anything for the community, well, they have. But the hill that they are choosing to stake themselves out on is no Pride Night."

Several years ago, MLB diversity officer Billy Bean, who came out as gay after a six-year playing career, said he believed a Pride Night eventually would come to Globe Life Field, the Rangers' retractable roof home that will host next month's All-Star Game. MLB did not have comment when asked last week about the Rangers' Pride Night status.

McDonnell and DeeJay Johannessen — chief executive of the HELP Center, an LGBTQ+ organization based in Tarrant County, where the Rangers play — also say they believe the Rangers some day will join



Rep. Mike Garcia, R-Calif., speaks during the House Select Committee on Intelligence annual open hearing on world wide threats at the Capitol in Washington, March 9, 2023.

Associated Press

the rest of MLB with a Pride Night.

At the same time, McDonnell and Johannessen say the catalyst for change might have to be new ownership. Johannessen said he hasn't requested to speak with majority owner Ray C. Davis to discuss Pride.

"I have not because, quite honestly, that's just not going to happen," Johannessen said. "I'd love to meet with Mr. Davis and talk about why it's important. But I don't think that's on his priority list right now."

Through a spokesman, the Rangers declined a request by The Associated Press to interview Davis.

The team issued a statement similar to one from a year ago, listing various organizations they have sponsored and steps they have taken internally to "create a welcoming, inclusive, and supportive environment for fans and employees."

"Our longstanding commitment remains the same: To make everyone feel welcome and included in Rangers baseball — in our ballpark, at every game, and in all we do — for both

our fans and our employees," the team said. "We deliver on that promise across our many programs to have a positive impact across our entire community."

The Rangers' stance doesn't keep Misty Lockhart, who lives near the ballpark, from attending about 35 games a year. Also a big Dallas Stars fan, she was at the NHL team's Pride Night in March at the American Airlines Center in downtown Dallas.

Lockhart was wearing a No. 91 Tyler Seguin Pride jersey that had been worn during warmups in a previous year and was signed by the Stars forward. The Stars logo on the front was in rainbow colors.

While she doesn't believe the Rangers risk losing fans over their stance on Pride, Lockhart would prefer the Rangers complete the MLB picture on something that is believed to have started with the Chicago Cubs in 2001.

"I think if it were something where MLB said, 'We're not participating in this,' but the MLB does participate in it. And the Rangers have cho-

sen not to," Lockhart said. "I think that's where I take the bigger issue, is they have actively chosen not to participate in it."

Lockhart says she doesn't see Pride Night as a political issue, but acknowledges there would be more pressure on the Rangers if they had a downtown stadium in the heart of Dallas County, where the majority of elected officials are Democrats. Tarrant County, home to Arlington and Fort Worth, is generally more conservative.

Will Davis — a Rangers fan from Marble Falls, about 200 miles southwest of the stadium in Central Texas — does see it as a political issue. He attended a recent game with his son's youth baseball team.

"I think it's a private organization. And if they don't want to have it, I don't think they should be forced to have it," Davis said.

"In something like this, this is a way for people to go as a state. We don't want the political stuff shoved down our throats one way or the other, left or right. We're coming out here to have a good time with friends or

family and let it be."

The Rangers celebrate Mexican heritage during a game in June and also have nights throughout the season dedicated to other ethnic groups along with Boy Scouts/Girl Scouts, first responders, teachers and the military. The team recognizes universities from around the Dallas-Fort Worth area and the state.

Those celebrations make the absence more glaring, Johannessen said.

"I think that the issue here is not whether they are losing every game or whether they are World Series champions," he said. "It's a matter of whether or not having a Pride Night is something that the ownership of the Rangers is supportive of."

"There may be deeply held beliefs of why they don't want to do that," Johannessen said. "And, we're very respectful of that, but also have to advocate for our community. Because it's kind of an embarrassment to the city of Arlington that their team is the only one that doesn't have a Pride Night."

The Rangers raised eyebrows when the slogan on the home page of their website changed to "Straight Up Texas" from "Run it Back" sometime around June 1. The team has used the "Straight Up Texas" slogan in previous years, and said the change had nothing to do with Pride Month.

Still, the attention the change received on social media illustrated the scrutiny the Rangers have invited as the only MLB team without a Pride Night.

"The Texas Rangers have reached out to us about working with us and providing services and volunteers," said Johannessen, whose organization has provided health services among other things in the LGBTQ+ community for 30 years.

"That actually hasn't happened yet. When they asked what they could do, the first thing I said was, 'Let's talk about a Pride Night.'"

Railroads must provide details of hazardous cargo immediately after a derailment under new rule

By JOSH FUNK

Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — A new federal rule finalized Monday aims to ensure first responders can find out what hazardous chemicals are on a train almost immediately after a derailment so they can respond appropriately.

Too often in past disasters like last year's fiery Norfolk Southern derailment in East Palestine, Ohio, firefighters risked their lives trying to extinguish a blaze without knowing the right way to respond. The local fire chief in charge of the response said it took him 45 minutes to learn exactly what was in the 11 burning tank cars on the train, but some firefighters from neighboring departments that came to help said they didn't know what they were dealing with until two hours after the Feb. 3, 2023, crash.

First responders need to know exactly which hazardous materials are on a train so they can look it up in the government's official guidebook and make sure they have the right protective gear and firefighting tools, said Tristan Brown, deputy administrator of the Pipelines and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration agency that proposed the rule.

Knowing what chemical is involved and how much of it is aboard also affects how



A view of the scene Feb. 24, 2023, as cleanup continues at the site of a Norfolk Southern freight train derailment that happened on Feb. 3, in East Palestine, Ohio.

Associated Press

big of an evacuation zone might be required to protect the public.

"There are so many different types of hazardous materials being transported across the country on any given day one in 10 goods that move across the United States and each one, poses unique risks and hazards, certainly to the folks who are running towards a fire," Brown said. "But certainly as well for anybody who may be living or working in that vicinity."

The rule was published just one day ahead of the Na-

tional Transportation Safety Board's final hearing on the East Palestine derailment, where they will discuss exactly what caused that crash and recommend steps to prevent similar disasters. Train crews have long carried lists of their cargo in the cabs of their locomotives, but in the middle of the chaos after a derailment those engineers and conductors, who might have moved their locomotives miles down the track, can't always be found right away.

That's part of why the largest

freight railroads developed an app called AskRail roughly a decade ago that enables firefighters to quickly look up the details of what each train carries. But not every firefighter had the app, and cell phones don't always have a signal strong enough to work in a disaster.

Regulators want the railroads to continue expanding access to that app, including to 911 centers, so information reaches first responders sooner. The railroads have been expanding access over the past year. The Association

of American Railroads trade group estimates some 2.3 million first responders now have access to that information as a result of the effort to expand into dispatch centers. The six biggest railroads also make train cargo information immediately available through the chemical industry's hazardous materials hotlines in the U.S. and Canada known as the CHEMTREC and CANUTEC, emergency call centers.

But the new federal rule also applies to the hundreds of smaller railroads that aren't involved in AskRail.

Even railroads that only have one or two employees now must have a plan to get the crucial details of their cargo to the local fire department quickly, even if its as simple as having the fire chief's cell phone number at the ready. Railroads also must test their plan at least once a year.

"In a hazmat incident, firefighters and first responders arriving on scene need to know what kind of hazardous materials are present so they can protect themselves and their communities," U.S. Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg said.

It's not clear how this rule might have changed the outcome in East Palestine, but more information could have helped responding firefighters. □

After FBI raid, defiant Oakland mayor says she did nothing wrong and will not resign

OAKLAND, Calif. (AP) —

In her first public remarks since federal authorities raided her home last week, a defiant and furious mayor of Oakland, California, said she did not do anything wrong and she has no plans to resign from office. Mayor Sheng Thao read from a prepared statement and took no questions Monday, four days after FBI agents carried boxes out of the home she shares with her son and partner as part of an investigation that included searches of two other houses owned by another family. Thao said the timing of the

very public raid was suspicious as it came days after backers of a mayoral recall were informed by the city clerk that they had collected enough signatures to qualify for the ballot, likely in November. Backers of the recall say public safety and economic vitality have worsened under the politically progressive mayor, and that she should not have fired Police Chief LeRonne Armstrong.

The city desperately needs "active, engaged and competent leadership" in this trying time, wrote Cynthia Adams, president of the Oakland chapter of

the NAACP in an emailed statement. "It is telling that



Oakland Mayor Sheng Thao makes remarks to the media at Oakland City Hall in Oakland, Calif., Monday, June 24, 2024, following an FBI raid on her home and three others last week.

Associated Press

no other city officials have defended the mayor, nor do any of them even seem to be in contact with her," she said.

It appears Thao and her son were home Thursday morning during the raid. She said her first priority was to make sure they were safe.

Thao, 38, took office in 2023. She is of Hmong descent and says she grew up poor. "And when my parents came to this country fleeing genocide, they never could have imagined that their daughter would one day be mayor of Oakland. I am my ancestors' wildest dream," she said. □

Lawsuit challenges new Louisiana law requiring classrooms to display the Ten Commandments

By SARA CLINE/KEVIN MCGILL
Associated Press

BATON ROUGE, La. (AP) — Civil liberties groups filed a lawsuit Monday to block Louisiana's new law that requires the Ten Commandments to be displayed in every public school classroom, a measure they contend is unconstitutional. Plaintiffs in the suit include parents of Louisiana public school children, represented by attorneys with the American Civil Liberties Union, Americans United for Separation of Church and State, and the Freedom From Religion Foundation.

Under the legislation signed into law by Republican Gov. Jeff Landry last week, all public K-12 classrooms and state-funded universities will be required to display a poster-sized version of the Ten Commandments in "large, easily readable font" next year.

Opponents argue that the law is a violation of separation of church and state and that the display will isolate students, especially those who are not Christian. Proponents say the measure is not solely religious, but that it has historical significance. In the language of the law, the Ten Commandments are



Louisiana Gov. Jeff Landry signs bills related to his education plan, Wednesday, June 19, 2024, at Our Lady of Fatima Catholic School in Lafayette, La.

Associated Press

"foundational documents of our state and national government."

The lawsuit filed Monday seeks a court declaration that the new law, referred to in the lawsuit as HB 71, violates First Amendment clauses forbidding government establishment of religion and guaranteeing religious liberty. It also seeks an order prohibiting the posting of the Ten Commandments in public school classrooms.

"The state's main interest in passing H.B. 71 was to impose

religious beliefs on public-school children, regardless of the harm to students and families," the lawsuit says.

"The law's primary sponsor and author, Representative Dodie Horton, proclaimed during debate over the bill that it 'seeks to have a display of God's law in the classroom for children to see what He says is right and what He says is wrong.'"

Defendants include state Superintendent of Education Cade Brumley, members of the state education board

and some local school boards. Landry and Louisiana Attorney General Elizabeth Murrill support the new law, and Murrill has said she is looking forward to defending it.

She issued a statement saying she couldn't comment directly on the lawsuit because she had not yet seen it.

"It seems the ACLU only selectively cares about the First Amendment it doesn't care when the Biden administration censors speech or arrests pro-life protesters, but apparently it will fight to prevent

posters that discuss our own legal history," Murrill said in the emailed statement. The Ten Commandments have long been at the center of lawsuits across the nation. In 1980, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that a similar Kentucky law violated the establishment clause of the U.S. Constitution, which says Congress can "make no law respecting an establishment of religion."

The high court found that the law had no secular purpose but rather served a plainly religious purpose.

In a more recent ruling, the Supreme Court held in 2005 that such displays in a pair of Kentucky courthouses violated the Constitution.

At the same time, the court upheld a Ten Commandments marker on the grounds of the Texas state Capitol in Austin. Those were 5-4 decisions, but the court's makeup has changed, with a 6-3 conservative majority now.

Other states, including Texas, Oklahoma and Utah, have attempted to pass requirements that the schools display the Ten Commandments. However, with threats of legal battles, none has the mandate in place except for Louisiana. □

Mass shootings across the U.S. mark the first weekend of summer

By JOHN SEEWER and SHARON JOHNSON
Associated Press

The first weekend of summer brought a tragic yet familiar pattern for American cities wracked by gun violence as mass shootings left dozens dead or wounded at a party in Alabama, an entertainment district in Ohio and a grocery in Arkansas.

It was the second straight weekend that saw an outbreak of mass shootings across the U.S., prompting mayors in places marred by the violence to plead for help.

In Michigan, a deputy was fatally shot while pursuing a suspected stolen vehicle in what the county sheriff described as an ambush. A Philadelphia police officer was critically wounded

Saturday after pulling over a car with four people.

Police in Montgomery, Alabama, said hundreds

of rounds were fired at a crowded party early Sunday, leaving nine people wounded. Interim Police

Chief John Hall said investigators recovered more than 350 different spent shell casings.

"This senseless violence just has to stop," said Montgomery Mayor Steven Reed, who called it a blessing that no one died while also asking for help in keeping guns out of the hands of criminals.

Gunfire also broke out early Sunday on the main street of a popular restaurant and entertainment district near downtown Columbus, Ohio.

Ten people were injured, one in critical condition, leading the city's mayor to call for more action from state and federal governments to keep guns off the streets and for parents to watch their children. Mayor Andrew Ginther said

the gun violence "is outrageous, it's unacceptable, and it must stop."

One person was killed and seven were injured in Dayton, Ohio, after a shooting early Monday in a neighborhood where a large crowd had gathered, police said. Six people were wounded early Sunday at a park in Rochester, New York, after police said at least one person started shooting into a crowd.

The weekend of mass shootings began Friday in the small city of Fordyce, Arkansas, where four people were killed and another 11 injured including the alleged gunman. The gunfire sent shoppers and store employees ducking for cover. Among those killed was a 23-year-old new mom. □



Bo Lanthrop, right, embraces a member of the Fordyce Police Department during a candlelight vigil in the parking lot of the Mad Butcher grocery store in honor of the victims of Friday's mass shooting, in Fordyce, Ark., Sunday, June 23, 2024.

Associated Press

Russian region of Dagestan holds a day of mourning after attacks kill 20 people, officials say

MOSCOW (AP) — Russia's southern region of Dagestan held the first of three days of mourning Monday following an attack by Islamic militants who authorities say killed 20 people, mostly police, and attacked Christian and Jewish houses of worship in assaults in two cities.

Sunday's violence in Dagestan's regional capital of Makhachkala and nearby Derbent was the latest that officials blamed on Islamic extremists in the predominantly Muslim region in the North Caucasus. It was also the deadliest in Russia since March, when gunmen opened fire at a concert in suburban Moscow, killing 145 people. An affiliate of the Islamic State group in Afghanistan had claimed responsibility for March's raid and quickly praised the attack in Dagestan, saying it was conducted by "brothers in the Caucasus who showed that they are still strong." The Washington-based Institute for the Study of War argued that the Islamic State group's North Caucasus branch, Vilayat Kavkaz, likely was behind the attack, describing it as "complex and coordinated."



In this photo taken from video released by The Telegram Channel of the head of Dagestan Republic of Russia on Monday, June 24, 2024, an internal view of the damaged Kele-Numaz synagogue in Derbent is seen after a counter-terrorist operation in republic of Dagestan, Russia.

Associated Press

Dagestan Gov. Sergei Melikov blamed members of Islamic " sleeper cells " directed from abroad, but didn't give any other details. He said in a video statement that the assailants aimed at " sowing panic and fear, " and attempted to link the attack to Moscow's military action in Ukraine but also provided no evidence. President Vladimir Putin had sought to blame the March attack on Ukraine, again without evidence and despite the

claim of responsibility by the Islamic State affiliate. Kyiv has vehemently denied any involvement.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Putin has received reports on Sunday's attacks and efforts to help the victims. The Investigative Committee, the country's top state criminal investigation agency, said all five attackers were killed. Of the 20 people killed, at least 15 were police.

Medical authorities in Dagestan

said at least 46 people were injured.

Of those, at least 13 were police, with four officers hospitalized in grave condition. Among the dead was the Rev. Nikolai Kotelnikov, a 66-year-old Russian Orthodox priest at a church in Derbent.

The attackers slit his throat before setting fire to the church, according to Shamil Khadulayev, deputy head of a local public oversight body. The attack came as the Orthodox

faithful celebrated Pentecost, also known as Trinity Sunday. Melikov, the Dagestan governor, said Sunday that also among the dead were a Russian Orthodox believer and 18 Muslims.

The Kele-Numaz synagogue in Derbent also was set ablaze. Shortly after the attacks in Derbent, militants fired at a police post in Makhachkala and attacked a Russian Orthodox Church and a synagogue there before being killed by special forces.

Russian news reports said the attackers included the two sons and a nephew of Magomed Omarov, the head of the Dagestan regional branch of the pro-Kremlin United Russia party. Omarov was detained by police for interrogation, and United Russia quickly dismissed him from its ranks. Melikov later said Omarov had been removed from his post, Russian state news agencies reported. In the early 2000s, Dagestan saw near-daily attacks on police and other authorities that was blamed on militant extremists. After the emergence of the Islamic State group, many residents of the region joined it in Syria and Iraq. □

A WHO official says the U.S.-built pier in Gaza not sufficient in delivering aid to Palestinians

By **AHMED HATEM** and **KAREEM CHEHAYEB**

Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — The reconnected U.S.-built pier off the coast of the Gaza Strip cannot supply Palestinians with anywhere near the level of aid they need, the head of the World Health Organization's Eastern Mediterranean region said Monday. Dr. Hanan Balkhy made the remarks after the U.S. military began delivering aid through the floating pier again, after it was removed a second time because of rough seas.

"The pier has supported a little bit, but it's not to the scale that is needed by any stretch of the imagination," Balkhy told The Associated Press in an interview. "So we need to emphasize on

the land routes to ensure the amount and the quantity and the efficiency."

The organization says that since Israel launched its ground operation into Rafah, aid delivery had declined by 67%, with over 50 WHO trucks stuck on the Egyptian side of the crossing into the southern city. Meanwhile, just three trucks were allowed into Gaza through the Kerem Shalom crossing.

Israel says it has allowed hundreds of truckloads of aid through the crossing, but says the U.N. has failed to pick it up. The U.N. says it is too dangerous for trucks to move through the area due to rampant lawlessness, despite Israeli pledges to carve out a safe corridor. Israel's war against Hamas,



Hanan Balkhy, the head of the World Health Organization's Eastern Mediterranean region, speaks during an interview with the Associated Press in Cairo, Egypt, Monday, June 24, 2024.

Associated Press

now in its ninth month, continues to face growing international criticism over widespread destruction in Gaza and a huge toll in civilian lives.

Aid groups have regularly

criticized the plan to deliver aid to Gaza by sea as ineffective and a distraction that has taken pressure off Israel to open land border crossings that can deliver aid in larger numbers.

The Israeli military's ground offensives and bombardments, following Hamas' surprise attack on southern Israel on Oct. 7, have killed over 37,600 people and wounded over 86,000 others, according to Gaza's Health Ministry. Some 1.3 million people displaced from the southern city of Rafah, over half the strip's population, now shelter in tents and cramped apartments in central Gaza.

And despite some increased aid into northern Gaza, experts say the enclave is at "high risk" of famine. Overcrowded hospitals struggle to keep the lights on due to lack of fuel and there are medicine shortages, while also sheltering many displaced Palestinians. □

Colombia launches talks with rebel group led by fighters who returned to arms after 2016 peace deal

By **MANUEL RUEDA**

Associated Press

BOGOTA, Colombia (AP) —

Colombia launched peace talks with the Second Marquetalia rebel group on Monday as the administration of leftist President Gustavo Petro tries to pacify rural areas of the country that have seen rising violence despite efforts to broker ceasefires with various armed groups.

The talks were announced in Caracas, Venezuela in a ceremony that included government delegates and rebel leaders who signed a 2016 peace deal but later took up arms again after saying they had become disillusioned with the implementation of the deal.

"We want to participate in politics without resorting to the use of weapons," said the Second Marquetalia's lead negotiator Walter Mendoza. "The condition for that will be for the government to fulfill its side of the accords."

With an estimated 2,000 fighters the Second Marquetalia is one of the nation's smaller rebel outfits.

The government's decision to begin peace talks with the group has been criticized by Colombian opposition leaders who accuse Petro of be-



Peace talks start between the armed Colombian group "Segunda Marquetalia - EB" and the Colombian government in Caracas, Venezuela, Monday, June 24, 2024. Sitting, from left, are representatives of the armed group, Francisco Toloza, Walter Mendoza and Ivan Marquez, as well as Venezuelan Foreign Minister Yvan Gil, Colombian Peace Commission Advisor Otty Patiño and Colombian government representative Armando Novoa.

Associated Press

ing soft on crime.

Negotiations with the Second Marquetalia are controversial because the group is led by members of the former Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC, who signed the peace deal but took up arms again, as some of them faced drug trafficking investigations.

"For the sake of peace I wish good luck to these talks,"

Humberto de la Calle, a senator who was the government's chief negotiator in the 2016 peace talks with the FARC, wrote on the social media platform X.

"But this sends an awful message to society: which is that cheaters and those who do not keep their word can get ahead."

The Second Marquetalia group is led by Luciano Marin,

a former FARC commander who was the group's chief negotiator in the peace talks that led to the disarmament of more than 13,000 rebels fighters.

The former rebels were spared prison sentences and given 10 seats in Colombia's congress as part of the 2016 peace deal, including a senate seat that was awarded to Marin, who is more com-

monly known by his nom de guerre of Ivan Marquez.

But the rebel leader grew weary of the peace deal in 2018, after one of his close comrades, Seuxis Paucias, was arrested by Colombian police on a U.S. arrest warrant, for allegedly conspiring to export 10 tons of cocaine to the United States.

As the investigation closed in on Marin, the rebel commander disappeared from public events, retreated into the jungle and announced the creation of his new rebel group in an August 2019 video where he claimed he had been betrayed by the government.

Marin has been fighting the Colombian state since then with his Segunda Marquetalia group.

But began to hold talks in private last year with officials from the Petro administration at secret locations in Venezuela. On Monday, Marin made his first appearance in public since his 2019 video. The rebel leader sported his trademark beard and delivered a speech in which he accused Colombian officials of trying to "trap" him and other former FARC members with drug trafficking investigations. □

A fire at a lithium battery factory in South Korea kills 22 mostly Chinese migrant workers

By **HYUNG-JIN KIM**

Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) —

A fire likely sparked by exploding lithium batteries swept through a manufacturing factory near South Korea's capital on Monday, killing 22 mostly Chinese migrant workers and injuring eight, officials said. The fire began after batteries exploded while workers were examining and packaging them on the second floor of the factory in Hwaseong city, just south of Seoul, at around 10:30 a.m., fire officials said, citing a witness.

They said they would investigate the cause of the blaze.

The dead included 18 Chi-

nese, two South Koreans and one Laotian, local fire official Kim Jin-young told

a televised briefing. He said the nationality of one of the dead couldn't be immedi-



Firefighters work at the site of a burnt lithium battery manufacturing factory in Hwaseong, South Korea, Monday, June 24, 2024.

Associated Press

ately verified.

In the past few decades, many people from China, including ethnic Koreans, have migrated to South Korea to seek jobs. Like other foreign migrants from Southeast Asian nations, they often end up in factories or in physically demanding and low-paying jobs shunned by more affluent South Koreans.

Kim said that one factory worker remained out of contact and rescuers continued to search the site. He said that two of the eight injured were in serious condition.

The fire started at one of the factory buildings owned by a battery manufacturer, Aricell. He said that authorities

would investigate whether fire extinguishing systems were at the site and if they worked.

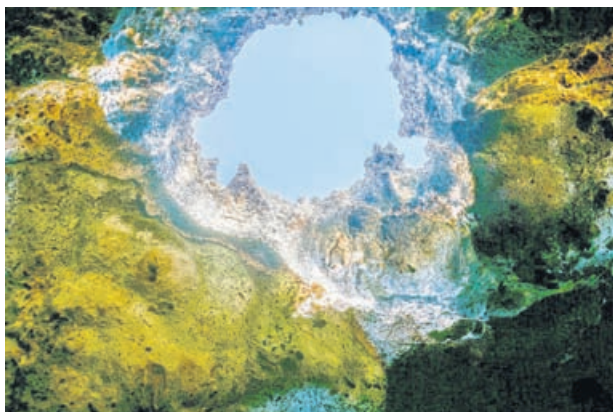
Rechargeable lithium-ion batteries are ubiquitous in consumer goods from laptops to cellphones. They can overheat if damaged, defective or packaged improperly, leading to fires and explosions and making them a hazard for shipment aboard aircraft.

The video of the incident showed the factory's second floor being engulfed with blaze, about 15 seconds after a small amount of white smoke was seen billowing from a battery, senior fire official Jo Seon-ho told a briefing later Monday. □

Today is going to be a good day

(Oranjestad)—Here's why: Aruba Today collected some things to do BEYOND the beach. Yes, we know. Aruba, located 15 miles north of Venezuela in the warm waters of the southern Caribbean, is home to beautiful white-sand beaches, 82-degree days, and thus ideal for the perfect beach day. But we are also blessed with some of the warmest people in the world and our island is 19.6 miles long and 6 miles across, with a total area of 70 square miles. Bit more to discover than the white stretch on the coastline we say. Let's mention some of these hidden gems.

Nature Calls



The Arikok National park is worth the ride. We love the hikes that are guided by the park's rangers whose job is to maintain trails and protect natural resources. The flora and fauna are beautiful and the historical sites tell you about the island's indigenous roots. The guided tours are even free of charge. If you are not up to walking, you can drive through the park, one way or another this park is a great place to spend an entire day. Cruising through the landscape you end up at some of the most stunning beaches like Dos Playa or Daimara Beach. In Total the park consists of 7907 acres protected nature with a richness of animals living in it. The Aruban whiptail lizard (cododo), Aruban cat eye snake (santanero) and endangered rattle snake (cascabel) are just some of them, you can also admire these close in the park's Visitors' Center. For more information, visit the website www.arubanationalpark.org

Philip's Animal Garden



To stay with the animals, let's hop to an amazing place. Something different to do, an experience that is to be enjoyed by people of all ages. Welcome to Philip's Animal Garden. We are not talking about a zoo here, this is actually a sanctuary for all types of creatures, from

horses to peacocks, kangaroos to turtles, monkeys, goats, and many, many more different species. The place was founded in 2009 and it is the only organization rescuing and rehabilitating exotic animals in Aruba, which has resulted in an amazing collection of these animals. They provide a suitable living environment for all the rescued animals. Up until now the owner, Philip, has built this shelter with his own efforts; building all the cages from scratch, designing all structures and welding them with his own bare hands. His goal is to upgrade the facilities to a world-class animal shelter with veterinary care and round-the-clock staffs. With the input from the Aruban community and visitors they provide the best care for these animals. Please check out their website for more information: www.philipsanimalgarden.com.

The Lighthouse



No, you would not think of this as a hidden gem. The California Lighthouse is actually one of the most known highlights in Aruba and many repeated guests most probably took the ride uphill already. But, there is a significant change to this tower. Since September 2016 you can climb the top. In 2015 Stichting Monumentenfonds started the restoration of the California Lighthouse. The project finished in September 2016 and the Lighthouse is now open for visitors to enjoy the beautiful view from the top. The construction of the California Lighthouse started in 1915. The name 'California' came from a vessel of the West India Company and Pacific Steamship Co. called 'California' that shipwrecked in the area in 1891. Therefore they came up with the idea of building a lighthouse that could indicate the island's eastern tip to ships with its light. www.arubalighthouse.com will give you more information.

Kayak in the Mangroves



Mangel Halto at Savaneta is definitely a place not to miss out on. The beautiful beach with the natural mangroves is simply a beauty, but if you

are into a more active way to enjoy the nature: take a kayak. While you are doing some work-out -as it might get a little windy and rough-, you will see the island from a different perspective. You can even make a stop to do some snorkeling at the reef. Its fun, it's healthy and for sure something else. There are several companies that offer kayak tours, we had good experience with The Shack Kayak Tours Aruba, find them on Facebook.

Take an "off-road" sightseeing tour



A must-do activity on the island is for sure taking an off-road sightseeing tour. If you have a rented car, you can drive through the north-eastern side of Aruba and explore the natural pools, caves, rock formations and gorgeous view of the Atlantic Ocean. To access most of these sights, like the natural pool (Conchi) and the Guadirikiri and Fontein caves, you must enter through the Arikok National Park and buy a day pass. Then you drive up the rugged road that leads you through the white dunes, caves and along the wind turbines. Other locations, like the Ayo and Casibari Rock formation are situated more in the center of the island, and are free for guests, 24 hours a day.

Go for a shopping spree in the city center



Need a new bathing suit? Head to the city center of Oranjestad, where there is countless of different stores—both high end and more affordable—that can offer you the service you deserve! Local shopping stores often offer a more affordable price, and have a variety of clothes, shoes, bathing suites, purses and more. Along the Royal Plaza strip, there are numerous jewelry stores with great quality jewelry. In the Renaissance mall, you can shop high-end luxury brands, like Dolce & Gabbana, Kate Spade, Louis Vuitton and more.

Around the high-rise hotel area near Palm Beach, the Paseo Herencia Mall contain a variety of shopping stores, restaurants, small food stands and even a movie theater! □

Visit the island's hidden natural pools

(Oranjestad)—Amongst the countless beaches surrounding the island that are well-known and frequently visited, there are an additional two “hidden” natural pools that are situated in the northern coast of the island, two ideal stops in your tour itinerary.

Conchi (Natural Pool)

For many years, Conchi was the only natural pool that we had on the island. Located in the Arikok National Park, near Boca Keto and the Daimari Ranch, Conchi—also known “Cura di Turtuga (Turtle’s Cove) or just Natural Pool—is reachable with any 4x4 vehicle or by foot if you’re up for a long hike. However, since it is part of the National Park, you must first get permission from park management to enter. You would have to purchase a day pass, and receive a wristband as proof of payment. Once you’ve completed that, you are set!

If you decide to hike from the entrance of the Arikok National Park, this is also possible: do bring plenty of protective clothing and



enough water and food—it could take you up to three hours to hike there!

However, when you eventually do get there, you will be greeted with crystal blue water surrounded by a natural rock formation that protects you from the wild waves on the other side. Though the pool is located on the northern side of the island (where the sea is largely rough and largely no suitable for swimming), the pool itself is very calm. It’s also relatively deep, and you can climb up the rocks and jump in!

Cave Pool

This relatively new pool appeared just a few years ago, when a part of the dried up coral floor broke off and created a partition between the ocean and what is now the natural pool that is hidden there.

Because it’s still so new, there is no official name for it, but most people just call it the cave pool.

Just like the Conchi, the new natural pool is situated on the northern coast of Aruba. However, this pool is much easier to reach with any type of vehicle, and there is no hiking needed. This spot has also become a regular stop for touring visitors.

When you get there, maybe you won’t be able to spot the pool immediately, because you will probably notice the moon-shaped lagoon where wild northern waves crash into each other. Sounds scary, but if you look down on your right, you’ll see a calm, crystal blue little pool in the corner. To get there, you have to climb down some stairs. Be careful when climbing down and follow the instructions of your tour guide if you have one.

And just like Conchi, this pool also has a jumping spot, and a rope to climb back up the boulder. □

Picture of cave pool is credited to RockaBeach Tours

Aruba Tourism Authority honored loyal visitors at Marriott Aruba Surf Club!



The Aruba Tourism Authority recently had the great pleasure of recognizing Distinguished Visitors of Aruba. The honorees were respectively honored with a certificate for their years of visits, loyalty, and love for the island of Aruba.

The honorary certification is presented on behalf of the Minister of Tourism as a token of appreciation and to say “Masha Danki” to guests who have visited Aruba 10, 20, or 35 years or more consecutively.

The three levels of honor are as follows:

Distinguished Visitor (10>years consecutively visiting Aruba)
Goodwill Ambassador (20>years consecutively visiting Aruba)
Emerald Ambassador (35>years consecutively visiting Aruba)

The honorees were:

Distinguished Visitors
Mr. Joseph & Mrs. Judith Nosal from Middletown Connecticut, United States.

Mr. Jorgino Willems representing the Aruba Tourism Authority, and staff members of Marriott Aruba Surf Club bestowed the certificate upon the honorees, presented them with gifts, and thanked them for choosing Aruba as their favorite vacation destination, as their home away from home.

The top reasons for returning to Aruba provided by the honorees were:

- Aruba’s Safety.
- Aruba’s beach.
- Aruba’s weather.
- “Aruba’s very beautiful”
- “Aruba’s Friendly Island”

On behalf of the Aruba Tourism Authority, we would like to express our sincere gratitude and appreciation to the honorees for their continued visits to the “One Happy Island”. □

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Aruba to me

ORANJESTAD — You are back and we would like to portrait you! By inviting you to send us your favorite vacation picture while enjoying our Happy Island.

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promotional purposes without compensation. Last but not least: check out our website, Instagram and Facebook page! Thank you for supporting our free newspaper, we strive to make you a happy reader every day again.

For today we received a lovely message from John and Liz Tameling from Cedar Lake in north-west Indiana (USA).

She wrote to us saying: Aruba to me is fun at Surf-side Beach watching the plane loads of new visitors arriving."

Thank you for sending us this wonderful message sharing what Aruba means to you with us and our readers! □



Craving a late-night snack? We got you covered!

(Oranjestad)—After a night out it's custom to grab yourself a late-night snack on the road. Here in Aruba, there are dozens of food trucks that you can visit to enjoy a late-night bite. Here are a few that can be found in the down town/hotel area.

Chalo burger



Chalo burger is a favorite among locals, and it's due to its popularity that it has branched out to different parts on the island. One of its main locations is in Palm Beach, near the hotel area. Chalo offers a variety of fast-food meals, like hamburgers, hotdogs, loaded fries and more! A popular dish among locals is the Salchipapa: loaded fries with sausages, cheese and a mix of sweet and savory sauce. Perfect for those late-night cravings!

Chalo is open Wednesdays through Mondays from 7pm to 12 am (Fridays till 1am), and is located at Palm Beach 178 (a little past the roundabout near the Piazza Gianni's). Other Locations include Tanki Leendert and Savaneta.

Julio's Corner



Situated in a nice little corner off the highway, Julio's Corner has a huge menu comprised of different dishes and snacks, all made with a Venezuelan twist! From arepa's to chicken wings, to pizzas and burgers, Julio's Corner has it all to satisfy your taste! Editor's choice for what to get at Julio's Corner is the quesadilla, which comes with a side of fries.

Julio's Corner is open Mondays through Saturday from 6pm to 2am (Fridays and Saturdays up to 4am), and is located in the parking lot of the Eagle Bowling Palace, right on the other side of the road from the Sasaki gas station.

Habibi Express



Habibi Express is a Lebanese food truck stand, one of very few food trucks on the island to sell Mediterranean food. Located right at the entrance of The Local Market near the cruise ship port, here you can fill your stomach (and heart) with a variety of options like shawarmas, doners, kapsalons and more, all 100% halal. When asked, the chef there recommends all foodies to try their lamb shawarma, as it's a favorite among guests.

Habibi Express is open every day from 5pm to 12am. While you're there, how about a picture with the genie? □



Alto Vista chapel and its link to Aruba's origins

According to Etnia Nativa, in the 18th century most of the inhabitants of Aruba were indigenous who lived on the north coast, one of the largest communities lived in Alto Vista.

As they were very religious, they had a chief with the name of Antonio Silvester who guided them in the Christian life and it was he who decided to build a stone chapel with a roof of corn rods, which would serve as a place of prayer. In 1750 it was blessed by Father Algemesi who came from Coro-Venezuela and appointed Domingo Antonio Silvester as the island's first prosecutor in the name of the Spanish crown and Rome. In 1752 the prosecution passed into the hands of Antonio Silvester's son-in-law, Miguel Álvarez, who continued to guide the parishioners in their prayers.

According to the book, The History of Alto Vista by R.H. Nooyen, it is not known when Domingo Antonio Silvester came to Aruba from Venezuela. The elders believe Antonio was a Span-

iard. In 1780, father Joseph Antonio de la Vegal called Bernardino Silvester, one of Antonio's sons with his wife Anna Cathalina Tromp, "neighbors and naturals of the island Aruba" and thus they became natives.

At the end of the eighteen century many inhabitants the island died as a result of the black fever epidemic and since people believed that the Alto Vista area was the most infected, they began to build their homes further south within the Noord area, so the town of Noord began to grow into a community till getting its own Church. However religious festivals continued to be celebrated at this sacred native place, with the custom of arriving in procession to Alto Vista.

Two-hundred years after the beautiful time of Alto Vista, people can no longer see much of the town of Alto Vista from 1750. With a lot of work they found the old foundations of the Church of the Queen of the Holiest Rosary to build a new chapel on the same



place. The entire surrounding area was empty and desolated, making it hard to imagine that Alto Vista was a town at all. A hundred years later, people can see the remains of around twenty houses, some made of stone and others of clay. Nowadays, only around six of these houses remain.

South of the chapel in the yard two graves can be observed, there was the cemetery which father

Pablo de Algemesi blessed. It is not certain, but it is believed that the two graves belong to Antonio Silvester and Miguel Alvares, according to Nooyen. About 50 meters near the chapel there are still the markings of an old house, where Antonio and Bernardino Silvester would have lived. About 200 meters from the chapel there is a water tank which the locals call Tanki Cacique. In the past this tank was closed. But mostly water was brought

out from the Poz di Noord, a well dug in the sand.

The chapel can be viewed from basically any point in the north side, even from Paradera and Sero Plat. All the historical remains around the chapel provide us with an idea on how the old people of Alto Vista used to live. Don't miss the opportunity to visit a place of historical significance with a window to Aruba's past. □

How Aruban beaches came to be!

(Oranjestad)—We've talked about the best beaches to visit on the island before, but have you ever wondered how Aruba got its white, sandy beaches, and why there's a clear difference between the northern and southern shores? Here are some fun facts about the development of Aruban beaches.

How did Aruba get its white, sandy beaches?
Aruba's beaches have de-

veloped over the span of thousands of years. Waves crashing on the rocky formations along our coast line (which consists mainly of coral reefs) have started to wear and tear the reefs over time, resulting in its gradual breakdown. Fish that feed off corals also contribute to this, one small bite at a time. Over the course of thousands of years, as waves continue to crash and fish continue to eat off the corals,

sand starts to accumulate around the area. However, whether the sand stays there is another question to be answered, and this is where we highlight the biggest difference between the northern and southern coast of the island.

The sand that accumulates around a torn coral reef is swept away along with the debris by the ocean stream. However, in areas where it's shallow and the



stream is weaker, the sand tends to stick to the bottom faster. This is why the beaches in the south—the areas with weaker stream and shallower ocean floors—has sand that stretches for miles. In contrast, the northern area, where the stream is much stronger and the ocean floor is much deeper, there is no sand present—they were swept away with the current!

Why north deep, but south shallow?
Ah! Good question...and

interesting phrasing.

Aruba is a continental island. The island actually forms part of South America, and the space between Aruba and the South American continent is simply referred to as land that runs under the ocean. This is why it gets gradually deeper in the south, whereas the ocean floor in the north runs steeply to the bottom.

Source: archival document provided by the National Archive of Aruba (ANA). □



Snakes you may encounter on Aruba

(Oranjestad)—If you have ever or will ever go off-roading on the island, you may encounter three types of snakes that are dominant on the island. The Cascabel, Santanero and Boa differ from each other in a couple ways, and local perspective on each one may help you understand what you need to do if you ever were to encounter one during your touring session on the island.

Cascabel (*Crotalus unicolor*)

The small Cascabel or Aruba Island Rattlesnake averages 70 cm in length. The body color is often uniform gray or light brown. There may be a faint pattern of diamond shaped markings on the back. This pattern is most noticeable on younger snakes. The most distinctive feature of this snake is the rattle at the end of its tail which makes a buzzing sound when the snake is alarmed. Cascabels are shy and not aggressive, but their venom can be dangerous to humans. In fact, it's the only venomous snake native to the island. It is best to leave this snake alone. Do not attempt to catch or kill it, as it could not only be dangerous, but this snake is also endemic to the island, and its preservation has become a legal mandate for all residents and visitors.

Cascabels hunt by waiting under bushes and fruiting trees to catch passing lizards, mice, rats, small rabbits, and an occasional bird. This is often considered to be one of the rarest rattlesnakes in the world. The range of the Cascabel is restricted to the rugged and mountainous areas of the island mostly within Arikok National Park. The Arikok National Park was designated in the early 1980s to include most of the rattlesnake's population, providing a safe refuge in which the snake can be protected and monitored. The government has also implemented outreach and education initiatives to change local perception of the snake and highlight its ecological and economic importance – it is now being promoted as a national symbol. Arikok's partnership with the Toledo zoo has safeguarded the rattlesnake ex-situ and led to a number of research projects collecting critical data on the Cascabel's abundance, life history and habitat requirement to help guide future conservation efforts.

Santanero

The slender Santanero or Aruban Cat-eyed Snake is a small fella, typically less than 50 cm long. This snake is recognizable by the large scales on the top of its head and by its pattern of dark brown bands alternating with light brown bands. The belly is plain white or cream colored without any markings. Native as well to the island, this snake is shy and not aggressive. However, it has enlarged teeth at the back of its mouth and mild venom which is not dangerous to humans, but can paralyze small lizards and frogs. Santaneros are most active at night when they search for food. During the day, they hide under rocks or leaves. They frequently climb trees and cactus. Santaneros eat toads, frogs, insects, and lizards. You may find Santaneros near dams during periods of rainy weather or crossing roads at night. This snake is found island wide. A Santanero in your garden will keep away the unwanted insects. If you encounter a Santanero around your garden, please do not harm this species.

Boa (*Boa constrictor*)

Boas are Aruba's largest snakes. The longest Boa found on the island was slightly less than 3 m. Newborn Boas average 35 cm. Boas are not venomous but are what is called constrictor snakes; they kill by wrapping themselves around a prey and suffocating them. The most distinctive feature of a Boa is its pattern of dark brown and tan blotches which become red toward the tail. The belly is white or cream colored with numerous black spots. Boas are excellent climbers and may be found in trees and cactus. Boas also hide in the leaves under bushes waiting to catch prey that pass. Boas catch their prey with their teeth and then constrict it in their coils. The Boa's diet consists of birds, lizards, rats, mice, and rabbits. Large Boas have been known to eat small goats and chickens. When threatened, Boas will hiss loudly.

Boas are a non-native species and are invasive to the island, risking the population of native lizards and birds. The first Boas were reported on the island in 1999. Since that time they have been found across the entire island in all types of habitats. If you ever encounter a Boa, please do not approach it. Instead, please call the Arikok National Park, as they are experienced in handling Boas. □



CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS 41 Music

1 Buffalo's range

NHL team 42 Music's

7 Mexican Waller

peninsula 43 Looked

11 Glacial intently

period 12 Heaps

13 2006

Chris-

topher

Nolan film

15 2020

Chris-

topher

Nolan film

16 Location

18 College

head

21 Doe or

buck

22 Lord of

the jungle

24 Museum

focus

25 Light

brown

26 Much of

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27 Used a

rotary

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29 Recite the

rosary

30 Linen

source

31 Yule

song

32 Pesto

herb

34 2023

Chris-

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Nolan film

40 Sense

MARCO PORTS
USEUP ADORE
SHORT YEMEN
TIED PET
ATLANTIC
CHAI CRUMBS
RUINS TROOP
EGRETS TONE
DEPLANED
WEB MALI
AXIOM ALAMO
SPARE METAL
POSED ADAGE

Yesterday's answer

DOWN

1 Plop

down

2 German

cry

3 Hive

dweller

4 "Jurassic

Park" dino

5 Snowy

bird

6 Glimpsed

7 Future

cake

8 Boxing

great

9 Use the

track

10 Had lunch

14 Car type

16 Letter

stroke

17 Rose part

19 Blue hue

20 Said with

a twang

21 Pop

22 Young

fellow

23 Opposing

vote

25 Dallas

native

28 Jar

fixtures

29 Tactful

31 Nephew's

sister

33 Mall unit

34 Not

running

35 Pod

item

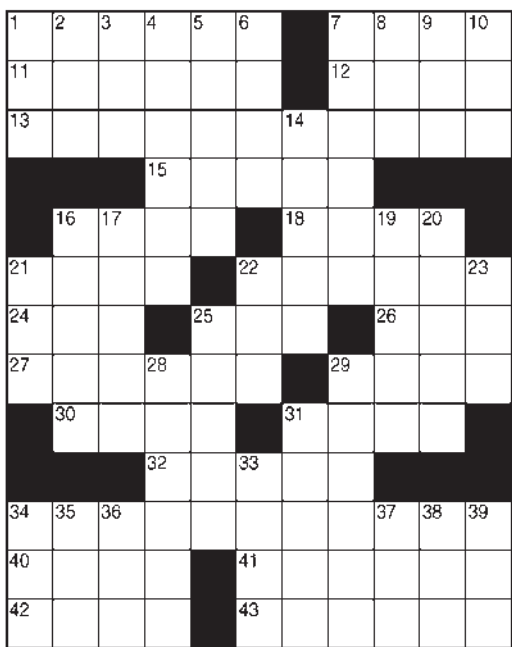
36 Favorite

37 Spoil

38 Genesis

woman

39 Scarlet



4-2

AXYDLBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

4-2 CRYPTOQUOTE

ATHCJZ SCKK FEBP YJX AE

SCKK GYTTCJPAA. GEKX EJ.

KCIP SCKK ZPM SYHBPH.

— YJCMY RHCNNYJ

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: THE FIRST OF APRIL IS THE DAY WE REMEMBER WHAT WE ARE THE OTHER 364 DAYS OF THE YEAR. — MARK TWAIN

Cruise ship Schedule: June 01 - June 25 2024

			ARR	DEPT	BERTH	
SAT	01	NORWEGIAN JADE	10.00	20.00	C	1
THU	06	CELEBRITY BEYOND	08.00	21.00	C	1
TUE	11	SILVER SHADOW	08.00	23.00	B	1
		ADVENTURE OF THE SEAS	08.00	20.00	C	1
		CARNIVAL MARDI GRAS	13.00	23.00	I	1
WED	12	CARNIVAL HORIZON	07.00	15.00	B	1
		RHAPSODY OF THE SEAS	09.00	21.00	C	1
TUE	18	CELEBRITY BEYOND	08.00	21.00	B	1
		CARNIVAL CELEBRATION	08.00	22.00	C	1
		CARNIVAL VISTA	13.00	23.00	I	1
TUE	25	CARNIVAL HORIZON	09.00	22.00	C	1

Helpful tips for your stay on Aruba

(Oranjestad)—When traveling to another country, especially for the first time, it is always better to be over-prepared than under-prepared. That is why we have a list of basic—but important—information that we think may come in handy to Aruba's visitors.

lets used on the island: type A with two flat prongs; type B with two flat and one grounding prong, and on occasion, type F with two round prong and two earth clips on the side. However, Type A is most commonly found in homes and establishments.

Supermarket hours



Supermarket hours may vary depending on where you are staying on the island. Generally though, most supermarkets are open from 8am to 9 or 10pm, Monday through Saturday. On Sundays, supermarkets generally close earlier; mostly around 2pm.

Electrical power



Aruba generally operates on 110V to 127V supply voltage and 60Hz. There are also three types of out-

Drinking water



The water that flows through the sinks of every house, hotels and other establishments is distilled and perfectly safe to drink. Aruba's drinking water exceeds WHO's international standards for water quality, so there is no need to buy bottled water from the store.

Safety



Since February 2024, Aruba has been categorized as the safest country in the Caribbean by The Telegraph, and many tourist that visit have often told us how they feel safe to explore the island or walk around at night. However, rare incidents do occurs, so keep yourself and your belongings safe.

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Apple becomes first target of EU's new digital competition rules aimed at big tech

By **KELVIN CHAN**
AP Business Writer

LONDON (AP) — European Union regulators on Monday leveled their first charges under the bloc's new digital competition rulebook, accusing Apple of preventing app makers from pointing users to cheaper options outside its App Store.

The European Commission said that according to the preliminary findings of its investigation, the restrictions that the iPhone maker imposes on developers using its mobile App Store had breached the 27-nation bloc's Digital Markets Act. The rulebook, also known as the DMA, is a sweeping set of regulations aimed at preventing tech "gatekeepers" from cornering digital markets under threat of heavy financial penalties.

The commission opened an initial round of investigations after it took effect in March, including a separate ongoing probe into whether Apple is doing enough to allow iPhone users to easily change web browsers, and other cases involving Google and Meta. Apple has been facing pressure on both sides of the Atlantic to tear down some of the competitive barriers around its lucrative iPhone franchise. The U.S. Justice Department has filed a sweeping antitrust lawsuit against Apple this year, accusing it of illegally monopolizing the smartphone market and boxing out competitors, stifling innovation and keeping prices artificially high. App makers such as Spotify had complained for years about Apple's requirement that subscriptions only be bought through iOS apps, allowing the company to take a commission of up to 30%.

Under the DMA's provisions, app developers must be allowed to inform customers of cheaper purchasing options and direct them to those offers. The commission, the bloc's executive arm, said App Store rules "prevent app developers from freely steering consumers to alternative channels for offers and content." Apple now has a chance to respond to the findings. The commission must make



The logo of Apple is illuminated at a store in the city center in Munich, Germany, on Dec. 16, 2020.

a final decision on Apple's compliance by March 2025. The company could face fines worth up to 10% of its global revenue, which could amount to billions of euros, or daily penalties.

The commission kept up the pressure on Apple, simultaneously opening a new investigation into contractual terms that it's offering app developers.

Regulators zeroed in on a "core technology fee" of 50 euro cents (54 cents) that Apple is now charging developers for each time their apps are downloaded and installed from outside Apple's App Store. The DMA's provisions

open the way for alternative app stores to give consumers more choice.

The commission said the new terms are a "condition to access some of the new features enabled by the DMA." Rivals had criticized the fee, saying it would deter many existing free apps, which don't pay any fees, from jumping ship.

"We are concerned Apple's new business model makes it too hard for app developers to operate as alternative marketplaces & reach their end users on iOS," the European Commissioner for Competition, Margrethe Vestager, said on social media.

Apple Inc. said over the past several months, it "has made a number of changes to comply with the DMA in response to feedback from developers and the European Commission." □

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Veronika Slowikowska worked toward making it as an actor for years. Then she went viral

By **KRYSTA FAURIA**
Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — When Veronika Slowikowska graduated from college in 2015, she did what conventional wisdom says aspiring actors should do: Work odd jobs to pay the bills while auditioning for commercials and background roles, hoping you eventually make it. And although the Canadian actor and comedian has had a host of affirmations from Hollywood that have kept her going, including a recurring role in the FX series "What We Do in the Shadows," Slowikowska inadvertently took a kind of back door to augment her fame when she began regularly posting filmed skits on social media last year.

It didn't take long for her to go viral, and her videos have since caught the attention of fellow comedians like Jack Black, as well as other celebrities including Justin Bieber. "You don't have quite the stamp of approval from the industry," she said during a recent interview with The Associated Press as she reflected on the weirdness of internet fame. But the attention has opened doors for the 28-year-old, including a



Canadian actor and comedian Veronika Slowikowska poses for a portrait on Friday, May 17, 2024, in Los Angeles.

spot in this year's star-studded Netflix is a Joke Festival lineup in Los Angeles, which she did amid a live comedy show tour.

Often improvised and missing an obvious punch line, her videos encapsulate an absurdist, internet-saturated millennial and Gen Z humor that surely leave many viewers scratching their heads in confusion. But her chops and training as an actor and comedian, including

from The Second City improv school in Toronto, set her apart from many content creators.

"Because I was trained and because I acted before, I think people always saw me as a little bit of both. Whereas I think maybe sometimes if you start as a content creator and then you're trying to book something, it's a little harder," she mused.

Although the clear star, she makes her videos with her

roommates and collaborators Kyle Chase and Michael Rees, with whom she splits profits from ads or views. They'll often brainstorm a general premise for a skit, then improvise the dialogue once the camera is rolling. In one of her first videos to blow up, the trio is celebrating Slowikowska's birthday. She begs the men to push her head in a cake, but they protest, claiming she asked for this last year and be-

came enraged when they did it. "Don't put my face in the cake and don't film it and don't make it go viral," she teases.

They finally cave. Now covered in frosting, Slowikowska immediately pulls an about-face, as her cheery laughter morphs into tears, and she storms out.

In another skit, she's found lying face down in a tantrum on a driveway. When the person behind the camera asks what's wrong, she mutters that she wasn't invited to be in the new Charli XCX music video.

"All the hottest girls on the internet were in it, and I seemed to have missed the invite," she says of the buzzy "360" music video that dropped in May, which boasts stars like Julia Fox, Rachel Sennott and Chloë Sevigny.

"We (expletive) up," the music video's director, Aidan Zamiri, commented on Instagram.

"Big time," Charli XCX responded.

A feature of Slowikowska's comedy that was an important realization for her is a willingness to look ugly when she's in character, something she struggled with in her early days of improv. □

Associated Press

Music record labels sue AI song-generators Suno and Udio for copyright infringement

BOSTON (AP) — Big record companies are suing artificial intelligence song-

generators Suno and Udio for copyright infringement, alleging that the AI music

startups are exploiting the recorded works of artists from Chuck Berry to Mariah Carey.

The Recording Industry Association of America announced the lawsuits Monday brought by labels including Sony Music Entertainment, UMG Recordings and Warner Records.

One case was filed in federal court in Boston against Suno AI, and the other in New York against Uncharted Labs, the developer of Udio AI.

Suno AI CEO Mikey Shulman said in an emailed statement that the technology is "designed to generate completely new outputs, not to memorize and regur-

gitate pre-existing content" and doesn't allow users to reference specific artists. Shulman said his Cambridge, Massachusetts-based startup tried to explain this to labels "but instead of entertaining a good faith discussion, they've reverted to their old lawyer-led playbook." Udio didn't immediately respond to requests for comment.

RIAA Chairman and CEO Mitch Glazier said in a written statement that the music industry is already collaborating with responsible AI developers but said that "unlicensed services like Suno and Udio that claim it's 'fair' to copy an artist's

life's work and exploit it for their own profit without consent or pay set back the promise of genuinely innovative AI for us all."

AI has been a heated topic of conversation in the music industry, with debates ranging from the creative possibilities of the new technology to concerns around its legality. In March, Tennessee became the first U.S. state to pass legislation to protect songwriters, performers and other music industry professionals against the potential dangers of artificial intelligence. Supporters said the goal is to ensure that AI tools cannot replicate an artist's voice without their consent. □



Chuck Berry performs at the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum on Feb. 26, 2024, in Boston.

Associated Press

Dearica Hamby replaces Sparks teammate Cameron Brink on US 3x3 Olympic team

By **DOUG FEINBERG**
AP Basketball Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Before the season started, Dearica Hamby wrote her goals down on a basketball. On the list was making the U.S. 3x3 Olympic team. She didn't initially achieve that because she wasn't one of the four members of the squad chosen earlier this month. Now she can check that off after replacing Los Angeles Sparks teammate Cameron Brink, who tore the ACL in her left knee last week.

"My heart breaks for her. When she got the news she made it and I got the news I didn't originally, we cried together," Hamby told The Associated Press in an interview. "It's kind of an ironic situation. I'm sure if she wanted to have anybody replace her, she'd want it to be me."

She joins Hailey Van Lith, Cierra Burdick and Rhyne Howard on the squad that will compete at the Paris Games next month. The U.S. won the inaugural 3x3 Olympic gold medal in Tokyo in 2021. It's the second con-



Los Angeles Sparks forward Dearica Hamby dribbles down the court during the first half of a WNBA basketball game against the Minnesota Lynx, game Sunday, June 11, 2023, in Minneapolis.

Associated Press

secutive Olympics that the U.S. team had to replace one of its original players. Katie Lou Samuelson missed the Tokyo Games after she caught COVID-19 right before the Olympics. She was replaced by Jackie Young, who helped the team go on to win a gold medal.

Hamby said she was initially upset when she first didn't make the roster, feeling she deserved to be on the team.

"I think that should have been something originally done. Cam and I both should have been on that team," she said. "I thought it was a no-brainer, but the committee is the committee."

Hamby was MVP of the 2023 3x3 AmeriCup and was part of the national team camp in Springfield, Massachusetts, in April.

"It is an honor to announce

Dearica Hamby's addition to the USA 3x3 Women's National Team and we look forward to getting to work as a squad very soon," said Jay Demings, USA Basketball 3x3 national team director and member of the USA Basketball 3x3 women's selection committee. "USA Basketball continues to keep Cameron Brink in our thoughts as she focuses on her recovery." Hamby reflected on how far

she's come as a player. "I'm grateful to be a part of it and they considered me. I wasn't in the pool growing up, I was 96 out of 100 as a high school player," she said. "So to be part of the 5 on 5 and 3 on 3 pool this year was special to me." And now she can check off one of the goals on the ball, that Hamby said she carried around in the preseason but was then relegated to a closet with her laundry. Now it's time to bring it back out. "I had a moment of clarity before the season, and wrote my goals on it for the year," she said.

Other goals on the ball include getting at least one MVP vote, taking the Sparks to the playoffs and shooting over 55% from the field. Hamby also wants to average 18 points and 10 rebounds.

Setting goals also rubbed off on her older daughter Amaya.

"She made her ball, too, and she made her goal to meet Taylor Swift," Hamby said laughing. "All the stuff on her ball is Taylor's songs and stuff about Taylor." □

Mets closer Edwin Díaz faces a 10-game suspension after being ejected for foreign substance on hand

CHICAGO (AP) — New York Mets closer Edwin Díaz is facing a 10-game suspension after being ejected from the team's 5-2 win over the Chicago Cubs on Sunday night for having a foreign substance on his hand. Díaz would be the eighth pitcher suspended for sticky stuff since MLB cracked down on pitchers attempting to use foreign substances to improve their grip and spin rates in 2021. Three of them have been Mets, including Max Scherzer and Drew Smith last year. The right-hander came on in the ninth to try to seal the victory for the Mets, but was tossed by third-base umpire Vic Carapazza before throwing a pitch after an inspection of his glove and throwing hand. Both Díaz and manager

Carlos Mendoza said the umpire said he thought the pitcher had too much of a combination of rosin, sweat and dirt on his throwing hand.

"The rules are the rules and they made the decision to throw him out," Mendoza said.

Carapazza, the crew chief, said in a pool report after game it "definitely wasn't rosin and sweat" on Díaz's hand.

"We've checked thousands of these," Carapazza said. "I know what that feeling is. This was very sticky."

Díaz, who said he was "really surprised" by the ejection, was not certain whether he'll appeal the suspension. "I use the same thing always," Díaz said. "I rub rosin and sweat and put my hand in the dirt a little bit to get a

grip on the ball."

He's the third Mets pitcher to be ejected for such an offense in the last year.

Smith, who was ejected and suspended 10 games last year for a similar offense, got two outs in place of Díaz. Jake Diekmann then came in and struck out pinch-hitter Patrick Wisdom for his third save for the Mets, who have won four straight series. New York has won 10 of 13 and is 13-6 in June and might need to find a temporary closer for the next two weeks.

The Mets begin a two-game series against the visiting Yankees on Tuesday before hosting Houston for three games.

"Look, we've been through a lot this year," Mendoza said.

"We'll find a way to get

through it, you know? We'll continue to piece it together and, yeah, guys are going to have to step up. And I'm pretty confident that

we'll get guys here that are going to be able to get us to the finish line when he's out." □



New York Mets relief pitcher Edwin Díaz, right, reacts after being ejected by their base umpire Vic Carapazza as manager Carlos Mendoza looks down as he walks to the dugout during the ninth inning of a baseball game against the Chicago Cubs in Chicago, Sunday, June 23, 2024.

Associated Press

The Texas Rangers are frustrating LGBTQ+ advocates as the only MLB team without a Pride Night

By SCHUYLER DIXON

AP Sports Writer

ARLINGTON, Texas (AP) —

Rafael McDonnell sometimes gets to address the staff of his beloved Texas Rangers on issues of diversity and inclusion through his role with the Resource Center, one of the leading LGBTQ+ organizations in the Dallas area.

For several years, the Rangers have been the only Major League Baseball team without a Pride Night. When questioned about it, Texas has cited its work with the Resource Center, among other organizations.

As Pride Month — the June celebration of LGBTQ+ culture and rights — comes and goes again without the Rangers participating, McDonnell tried to explain the connection between his group and the team he has loved and watched for the better part of 50 years. "It's a complicated relationship," McDonnell said. "As someone who grew up watching the Rangers, as someone who has gone to games since the 1970s, some of my biggest and best memories are going to games at the old Arlington Stadium with my late grandfather and listening to games on the radio in his backyard.

"It pains me that this remains an issue (after) all these years."

Painful enough, McDonnell said, that he considered not attending the parade with his boyfriend when the Rangers celebrated their first World Series championship last fall. Ultimately, he decided to go.

McDonnell, the communications and advocacy manager for the Resource Center, says the Rangers invited his group to help them develop a policy of inclusion about five years ago.

The team has sent employees to volunteer for programs in an organization that grew out of the AIDS crisis in the 1980s and advocates for marriage equality and transgender rights.

While he has continuing conversations with members of the Rangers staff, McDonnell says he doesn't recall any



Arizona Diamondbacks' Corbin Carroll walks past the Diamondbacks logo designed for Pride Night during the first inning of the team's baseball game against the Chicago White Sox, Friday, June 14, 2024, in Phoenix.

Associated Press

since the five-game victory over the Arizona Diamondbacks in last year's Fall Classic.

"For a long time, I've thought that it might be somebody very high up in the organization who is opposed to this for some reason that is not clearly articulated," McDonnell said. "To say that the Rangers aren't doing anything for the community, well, they have. But the hill that they are choosing to stake themselves out on is no Pride Night."

Several years ago, MLB diversity officer Billy Bean, who came out as gay after a six-year playing career, said he believed a Pride Night eventually would come to Globe Life Field, the Rangers' retractable roof home that will host next month's All-Star Game. MLB did not have comment when asked last week about the Rangers' Pride Night status.

McDonnell and DeeJay Johannessen — chief executive of the HELP Center, an LGBTQ+ organization based in Tarrant County, where the Rangers play — also say they believe the Rangers someday will join the rest of MLB with a Pride Night.

At the same time, McDonnell and Johannessen say the catalyst for change might have to be new ownership. Johannessen said he hasn't

requested to speak with majority owner Ray C. Davis to discuss Pride.

"I have not because, quite honestly, that's just not going to happen," Johannessen said. "I'd love to meet with Mr. Davis and talk about why it's important. But I don't think that's on his priority list right now."

Through a spokesman, the Rangers declined a request by The Associated Press to interview Davis.

The team issued a statement similar to one from a year ago, listing various organizations they have sponsored and steps they have taken internally to "create a welcoming, inclusive, and supportive environment for fans and employees."

"Our longstanding commitment remains the same: To make everyone feel welcome and included in Rangers baseball — in our ballpark, at every game, and in all we do — for both our fans and our employees," the team said. "We deliver on that promise across our many programs to have a positive impact across our entire community."

The Rangers' stance doesn't keep Misty Lockhart, who lives near the ballpark, from attending about 35 games a year. Also a big Dallas Stars fan, she was at the NHL team's Pride Night in March

at the American Airlines Center in downtown Dallas. Lockhart was wearing a No. 91 Tyler Seguin Pride jersey that had been worn during warmups in a previous year and was signed by the Stars forward. The Stars logo on the front was in rainbow colors.

While she doesn't believe the Rangers risk losing fans over their stance on Pride, Lockhart would prefer the Rangers complete the MLB picture on something that is believed to have started with the Chicago Cubs in 2001.

"I think if it were something where MLB said, 'We're not participating in this,' but the MLB does participate in it. And the Rangers have chosen not to," Lockhart said. "I think that's where I take the bigger issue, is they have actively chosen not to participate in it."

Lockhart says she doesn't see Pride Night as a political issue, but acknowledges there would be more pressure on the Rangers if they had a downtown stadium in the heart of Dallas County, where the majority of elected officials are Democrats. Tarrant County, home to Arlington and Fort Worth, is generally more conservative.

Will Davis — a Rangers fan from Marble Falls, about 200

miles southwest of the stadium in Central Texas — does see it as a political issue. He attended a recent game with his son's youth baseball team.

"I think it's a private organization. And if they don't want to have it, I don't think they should be forced to have it," Davis said. "In something like this, this is a way for people to go as a state. We don't want the political stuff shoved down our throats one way or the other, left or right. We're coming out here to have a good time with friends or family and let it be."

The Rangers celebrate Mexican heritage during a game in June and also have nights throughout the season dedicated to other ethnic groups along with Boy Scouts/Girl Scouts, first responders, teachers and the military. The team recognizes universities from around the Dallas-Fort Worth area and the state.

Those celebrations make the absence more glaring, Johannessen said.

"I think that the issue here is not whether they are losing every game or whether they are World Series champions," he said. "It's a matter of whether or not having a Pride Night is something that the ownership of the Rangers is supportive of."

"There may be deeply held beliefs of why they don't want to do that," Johannessen said. "And, we're very respectful of that, but also have to advocate for our community. Because it's kind of an embarrassment to the city of Arlington that their team is the only one that doesn't have a Pride Night." The Rangers raised eyebrows when the slogan on the home page of their website changed to "Straight Up Texas" from "Run it Back" sometime around June 1. The team has used the "Straight Up Texas" slogan in previous years, and said the change had nothing to do with Pride Month.

Still, the attention the change received on social media illustrated the scrutiny the Rangers have invited as the only MLB team without a Pride Night. □